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FROM THE OFFICE OF GOVERNOR EDWARD J. KING

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Governor Edward J. King today issued an Executive Order creating a special commission to investigate the severity of the polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB) contamination in the Acushnet River estuary of New Bedford and to develop recommendations and seek funding for its clean-up.

"PCB contamination poses a potentially serious environmental and public health problem," said Governor King. "In addition, it is placing a serious economic burden on the New Bedford fishing industry and other area businesses. The problem demands swift and effective action from the state," Governor King added.

"For the first time, the Executive Order locks into place a comprehensive strategy for addressing the PCB problem in New Bedford and sets a firm deadline for completing the plan of action," said Environmental Affairs Secretary John A. Bewick.

Governor King's Executive Order creates the Acushnet River Estuary Commission and charges the group with submitting a final report to the Governor on the extent of contamination, clean-up recommendations, and possible funding sources, by August 15, 1982.

PCB's, an oily substance once used as an insulating fluid in the electronics industry, are no longer manufactured in this country.

Commissioner Anthony Cortese of the Department of Environmental Quality Engineering, noted that state and federal officials have documented PCB contamination in an area extending from the northernmost extreme of the Acushnet River estuary to the sediments in the vicinity of the New Bedford municipal wastewater outfall, a distance of over six miles.

(more)

"The special commission will draw from the studies already being conducted by the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs and Representative Roger Goyette's ad hoc group. It will thoroughly evaluate the PCB contamination in the estuary. The commission will also develop a specific agenda for reducing contamination in the estuary and will prepare a detailed budget for managing clean-up efforts that will draw upon available resources from federal, state and local agencies," said Governor King.

"The commission will also recommend standards for the closing and reopening of areas for commercial fishing and other marine activities and will assess the level of law enforcement personnel needed to control access areas," said Governor King.

18,000 acres of productive lobstering ground in New Bedford are already closed to fishing due to PCB contamination. Additional areas are also closed to the taking of finfish and shellfish.

The Executive Order signed by Governor King takes effect immediately.

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